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Declassified Case: NW# 78134 Date:
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MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telephone Conversation with President of
Russia

PARTICIPANTS: President Vladimir Putin

Interpreter: Nikolai Sorokin
Notetaker(s): Michael Bradecamp,
Christopher Davis, Danielle Lukich

DATE, TIME March 07, 2008, 7:31 a.m. - 7:50 a.m. EST
AND PLACE: Oval Office

The President: Hey, Vladimir. (U)

President Putin: Hi, George. How are you? (U)

The President: I'm doing good. (U)

President Putin: Wonderful. Tomorrow we're having a Women's
Day celebration. It's a major holiday in our country. So
greatest regards to Laura, your mother, and your daughters. (S)

The President: Great. Every day is Women's Day in my house --
just like your house. (S)

President Putin: Thank you for your call to Dmitry Medvedev,
and your congratulations to him. (S)

The President: It was a good call. He's a fellow who is
following in big footsteps and I'm looking forward to getting to
know him better. (S)

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Classified by: John I. Pray, Jr.
Reason: 1.4(b)(d)
Declassify on: 3/11/33

CAUTION: A Memorandum of a Telephone Conversation (TELCON) is not a verbatim transcript of a discussion. The text in this document records the notes and recollections of Situation Room Duty Officers and NSC policy staff assigned to listen and memorialize the conversation in written form as the conversation takes place. A number of factors can affect the accuracy of the record, including poor telecommunications connections and variations in accent and/or interpretation. The word "inaudible" is used to indicate portions of a conversation that the note taker was unable to hear. An interpreter facilitated this conversation. Differences in interpretation may result in subtle differences in the exact meaning of phrases.

President Putin: Thank you, personally, and thanks to your Administration for such a positive reaction. The candidates for the next presidential election are not nibbling or biting anyone but they are itching. (S)

The President: That leads to this very important phone call. You have a president soon-to-be and we'll have a new president very soon. The question is, Vladimir, can you and I use our friendship to forge a strategic relationship that will fuse issues in the future or lock in new areas of agreement? (S)

President Putin: I'd love to. I'd love to. (S)

The President: This is the problem. I'd like to be very candid. I know your strong opinions, because you made them very clear, on Georgia and Ukraine. On the other hand, I feel very compelled, in spite of your objections, to be forward-leaning on the MAP application process. It is a long process for application. If ever admitted, which by the way is uncertain, there is a NATO guarantee there would be no permanent bases or troops in Ukraine or Georgia. But I want you to know the truth as we dialogue on what I hope we can move on in a very constructive way. (S)

President Putin: George, this is a crackdown position that has been detailed by your Ambassador Burns. And I would like to thank you for sending to Moscow such a knowledgeable and intelligent person. I don't believe we will be able to discuss these issues over the phone. Only one brief comment I allow myself. You personally and the U.S. have always been for us, the model of the development of democracy. And that's how your country has positioned itself in the world, as a standard -- a yardstick. I understand it remains valid to this date. Correct? (S)

The President: Well, we're trying to help other democracies. We realize not everyone looks like us. They have their own history and traditions. But yes, we're trying to foster democracy. (S)

President Putin: There are some basic fundamental things. Democracy is, first and foremost, taking into account the opinion of the people. Eighty-five percent of the citizens in Ukraine do not want to be in NATO. Is it to be construed as democracy if the country is moving towards something that 85 percent of people do not want? We can discuss this in an

open manner as friends. And cast our eye 15 years or so into the future. And how important would the relations between the U.S. and Russia be in the future? What role would they play globally? And what should be done to strengthen and not destroy these relations? Therefore, I suggest after the Russia and NATO meeting in Bucharest, it would take only a one hour flight to Sochi. Take a flight and we'll have a cup of tea and have a friendly discussion. And before that, we will have a meeting in the "2+2" with Secretaries Rice and Gates. We will talk with them about Serbian positions in that region and other concerns of ours. We will be engaged in a frank and open discussion, and are expecting some practical outcomes. And with you, we can continue discussion about strategic nuclear weapons and other nuclear related issues. And we would be able to discuss what to do next on Iran. We just adopted the Security Council Resolution to everyone's satisfaction, and the anti-terrorist activities will be incorporated quite well. Despite the existence of numerous points of disagreement, we have numerous points that coincide. (S)

The President: Thanks for the invitation. There's a concern I have to share. I would really love to come. However, if you feel like at Bucharest you need to make a strong statement that would be anti-U.S. or anti-West, it would make it difficult for me to come. I won't tell you what to say. You're my friend. You're going to have to be your own judge on that. I would hope that the spirit at Bucharest is positive, not antagonistic. I make up my own mind, but it would be very hard for me. (S)

President Putin: I'm afraid I scared somebody to smithereens. I do not have any intent to get into a quarrel with anyone, or I would not come there. But, on certain points, I will have to relate the position of the Russian Federation, with certain clarity. But everything will be in a gentlemanly manner. (S)

The President: Yes, you scared me. But you can be a tough guy when you want to be. But, you can be very firm and very clear on your rhetoric and you know what I mean. You're very effective when you want to be in terms of being tough and hard. So I appreciate you saying you'll be gentlemanly. I would like to come. As well, I'm going to send you a letter on what I think should be covered in the "2+2" meeting. I'll share some things on my mind because we can't share them over the phone. (S)

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President Putin: That will be wonderful and very useful. When Rice and Gates came for the first time, they discussed certain points of agreement and then retracted them. (S)

The President: I know, I know. That's why this letter will help keep my bureaucracy locked in. (S)

President Putin: And my best regards to Condi. On the occasion of the forthcoming International Women's Day, I promise during my statement in Bucharest to be very intelligent and gentlemanly. (S)

The President: This will be good. I'm looking forward to seeing you. Two old warhorses writing the final chapter to help other presidents. Alright. I'll talk with you. (P)

President Putin: I understand there are even older horses in your stable. (S)

The President: Alright -- I will talk with you. (U)

President Putin: Yes. Thanks. Good-bye. (U)

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The President: Thanks, give my best to Lyudmila and the girls. (U)

President Putin: Okay. (U)

--End of Conversation--